




“Year of sustainability, openness, and new roles: A Ukrainian university library in wartime”

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SPECIAL ISSUE: ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT IN THE CONDITIONS OF WAR

Tetiana Kolesnykova (Ukraine)

YEAR OF SUSTAINABILITY, OPENNESS, AND NEW ROLES: A UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN WARTIME

Abstract

One year of Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine to seize its territory and destroy the Ukrainian people as a nation, its language, culture, scientific achievements, and educational traditions have demonstrated the incredible adaptability of universities and their libraries. This paper aims to analyze the administrative aspect of the urgent adaptation of library teams of Ukrainian higher education institutions to martial law conditions in the example of the Scientific Library of the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies (USUST). The paper considers the experience of survival, resilience, and adaptation of the USUST library to the war, which can be extrapolated to other libraries of Ukrainian higher education institutions. In addition, the study comparatively analyzes quantitative indicators of five university libraries as of January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023. The main vectors of library activity are distance, openness, unification, and improvement of the single information space. The primary motivating factors for librarians' resilience and adaptation to wartime working conditions are belief in the Armed Forces and the victory of Ukraine. The study emphasizes the importance of university libraries' support of open educational resources as one of the methods of overcoming the Ukrainian linguocide. Library directors in wartime, with predominantly female staff, note the impact of psychological factors on their professional activities. Despite the threatening trends, libraries continue to support educational and scientific processes in their universities, launching new directions of activity.

Keywords

university libraries, war, digital library services, administrative aspect, adaptation, resilience, linguocide, Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine war

JEL Classification

I23, I28, M10, M12, M14

INTRODUCTION

For the higher education of Ukraine, the unprecedented challenges of the destructive Russia-Ukraine war required urgent actions to preserve the life of university communities, face the destruction of the infrastructure of higher education institutions, and reformat the learning mode, establishing the work timetables of each structural unit, launching of online platforms, providing innovative communication forms and methods.

All these processes took place at the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies (USUST) in the front-line city of Dnipro. The structure of USUST by 2023 is extensive: 3 institutes (14 faculties in Dnipro and Lviv) and 8 colleges (in Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Lviv, Kryvyi Rih, Nikopol, Pavlograd, Vilnohirs'k, and Novomoskovsk). Therefore, ensuring the communicative aspect is crucial.

Dnipro has a population of more than one million; it is the space capital of Ukraine, a large transport and machine-building hub, and a

crisis medicine center for those wounded at the front. Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war (in 2014), residents of the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions have found refuge in Dnipro city. Since February 24, 2022, refugees from Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Melitopol have joined their number. For example, the number of forced migrants living in USUST dormitories has increased to a thousand internally displaced persons, a third of whom are children.

The university libraries of Ukraine, as well as their universities, no matter in which region they are located, in one way or another, faced the harsh realities of war: injury and loss of employees, evacuation and mobilization, physical danger, downtime, destruction of premises, loss of digital infrastructure and book collections, salary cuts, and staff reductions. Despite everything, libraries are still open, quickly adapting and organizationally solving the issue of information support of educational and scientific processes in their higher education institutions.

However, the professional literature has not sufficiently disclosed university libraries' crisis management in the first year of the full-scale Russian invasion. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the administrative aspect of the urgent adaptation of libraries of Ukrainian higher education institutions to martial law conditions in the example of the Scientific Library of the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies.

1. RESULTS

The Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies (USUST) already established the Operational Headquarters for Response and Life Support at 9:30 am on February 24, 2022, for the period of martial law in Ukraine. The need for quick and coordinated actions also solved the problematic state of the university, where the organizational processes of unification of didactics and highly professional scientific schools of two well-known national institutions of higher education in Ukraine continued.

USUST was formed on March 31, 2021, by merging two powerful branch-based national higher education institutions: the Dnipro National University of Railway Transport named after Academician V. Lazarian (DNURT) and the National Metallurgical Academy of Ukraine (NMetAU). Accordingly, two scientific libraries have also merged, which, with their unique industry-specific printed funds and digital collections, are the most potent collections in Ukraine on the development of railway transport and metallurgy. That is why the issue of crisis management during the pandemic and war was complicated by transformational changes associated with the unification of printed funds physically located in different places, digital collections, and the creation of a single digital infrastructure of the library using web technologies.

1.1. Everyday affairs, achievements, and plans of the USUST library before the full-scale Russian aggression

The library fund of USUST, which includes about 1.4 million copies of printed and electronic publications, is a universal base for the educational process and scientific research. Funds are not limited to academic literature but contain scientific and fiction literature, encyclopedic and reference publications, dictionaries, collections of legislative materials, regulatory and technical documentation, rare scientific and technical journals, particular types of scientific and technical literature, dissertations and author's abstracts, unpublished materials, periodicals, informational and bibliographic magazines (Scientific Library of Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies, n.d.).

However, the administration and the assert of the USUST library, realizing that the principal value of libraries is the open distribution of information and knowledge, are the initiators of successful digital projects with the support of scientists, teachers, students in their educational and research activities.

At the beginning of 2022, the library of USUST employed 42 staff and served 10,338 registered users of all structural subdivisions online or offline,

regardless of their location and region (Table 1). In addition, except for students, scientific and scientific-pedagogical staff of USUST, the library serves external users: from other higher education institutions, railway and metallurgical enterprises of Ukraine, scientific and project institutions, residents of the student campus or residents of the city who, as volunteers, are engaged in citizen science.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited physical presence in all libraries, the number of offline users and services (including mass events) has significantly decreased. However, thanks to the prompt and transparent switch to remote work, the rapid adaptation of librarians to the online environment, and the development of well-coordinated activities of all teams, it was possible to minimize the loss of the range of digital services and the number of users (Kolesnykova, 2020).

For example, thanks to effective management in creating a full-fledged multifunctional web-oriented ecosystem (Kliushnyk et al., 2019), remote services have become commonplace: user registration, ordering literature, compiling lists of publications for syllabuses, providing access to databases, scanning retro funds, providing UDC, checking student works for plagiarism, conducting webinars (on academic integrity, improving the brand of a scientist, CC licenses), uploading publications in the eADNURT repository, creating video lessons and LibGuides, information and analytical support, and digital publishing services.

As always, the typical working day on February 23, 2022, in the USUST library was intense. The administration and heads of individual areas of work discussed positive and negative points in merging the electronic catalogs of the two libraries, changing the architecture of the eADNURT repository, considering the possibilities of expanding online services, and proposing new topics for student podcasts. There were jokes, funny comparisons, pride in completed projects, analysis of errors, and bold ideas for introducing new library services that seemed simply fantastic. It was the last day of the peaceful life of the USUST library.

The USUST library's experience in using technologies to support distance education and scientific

research, acquired during the COVID-19 pandemic, was used during the martial law in Ukraine in connection with the full-scale armed Russian aggression on February 24, 2022.

1.2. Survival, rethinking of its own role, and adaptation of the USUST library after the beginning of a full-scale armed Russian invasion

At four o'clock in the morning on February 24, 2022, massive rocket attacks on the city of Dnipro, on other cities and villages of Ukraine, changed the life of every Ukrainian and the lives of the people in Europe and the world. The Russian Federation started a full-scale bloody war to take Ukraine's territory, eliminating Ukraine as a nation, its language, culture, science, and education.

Four hundred days of life in the conditions of terrible aggression proves that USUST librarians overcame the fear, despair, and confusion of those first days and weeks thanks to family and friends, glorious defender soldiers, and thanks to work. Doing something for others gives meaning to life and helps move on (Kolesnykova, 2023).

On the first day, the library administration, following the action plan of the Military Operational Headquarters for Response and Life Support of USUST and orders of the University Emergency Situations Commission on the organization of civil defense, made several decisions to protect the life and health of the staff consisting exclusively of women. These are:

- evacuation to safe regions and countries (especially mothers with children);
- urgent transfer of all work processes to online mode;
- official communication channels – phone, emails, Viber groups, Zoom;
- the daily contact time for everyone is 9:00 am;
- taking into account the introduction of unplanned vacations for students (for the

24-hour continuation of the “Ask a librarian” service on the website);

- pass mode for employees who supported critical infrastructure (including library servers).

And, of course, librarians looked for (and found!) solutions for preserving the library’s equipment and digital resources, including by integrating the latter into cloud environments, international repositories, and other safe places outside of Ukraine. Colleagues (acquaintances and strangers) from foreign universities and scientific communities provided invaluable support and help in solving essential issues from the first days of severe russian aggression.

For example, thanks to the European Network of Open Education Librarians (ENOEL; manager Paola Corti), short training videos adapted to Ukrainian reality (“How to Stop the Bleed” or “How to handle explosive devices”) were received, posted on the website and in social networks, as well as, as material volunteer aid, children’s things were collected and sent to Ukraine.

To convey the invaluable practical experience of wartime Ukrainian librarians to the international community of educators and scientists, Coalition SPARC Europe (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources in Europe; Director Vanessa Proudman) organized the free participation of the Director of the USUST library, Dr. Tetiana Kolesnykova, at International Congresses OpenEd22 (USA), “Open Education research, practice and policy – OER” (Scotland), Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (Canada).

1.3. When the unreal became real

Was it difficult for the librarians of USUST and other universities in Ukraine to work during war-time? To answer with a simple “yes” is to say nothing. It was challenging physically, morally, and psychologically (Medved, 2022; Kyryczok, 2023).

Taking advantage of every opportunity (ceasing of the air raid signal, restoration of the power supply, or good communication), librarians were working with users and communicating with each other both remotely and physically on the library premises.

Having destroyed the myths about the conservatism of librarians, each team member quickly deepened their own experience in organizing the workplace. For example, although it was almost impossible to imagine until February 24, 2022, USUST librarians worked in basements and subways, in cafes and cars, in “Points of Invincibility,” or corridors between two walls to avoid possible injuries from windows during bombings.

The library’s all-female staff has learned to assess whether power from uninterruptible power supplies, batteries, generators, and mobile or wired Internet connections will be sufficient during repeated blackouts. The work schedule under such conditions was flexible. Librarians endured work in cold rooms of offices or library halls at a constant temperature of only 6-9 degrees Celsius, because russian missiles systematically destroyed the critical infrastructure of Ukraine. But at that time, thanks to the heroic work of the Military Operations Headquarters and the energy workers of USUST, the connection was turned on. The Internet appeared in educational buildings and the University campus.

Librarians record the chronicles of the current events of the war and form a source base for its further practical use. For example, the 7th International Conference “University Library at a New Stage of Social Communications Development” (October 6-7, 2022) was held on time and at a high level, which became a platform for communication between specialists from 17 countries.

The servers and website of the library, the websites of scientific journals and the repository, social networks, and all communication channels became like living beings with which the librarians talked and agreed: “Don’t let us down because we still have so much to do!”

1.4. New senses and changes in the social aspect of the library’s activities

The activities of the USUST library acquired new meanings. Every day, librarians take an exam on humanity. They are actively volunteering –make camouflage nets for the Armed Forces of Ukraine,

collect food and form food kits, help the wounded in hospitals, donate blood, and transfer their own funds to the needs of the Armed Forces.

On the campus and in the dormitories of USUST, there are volunteer points for receiving refugees from war zones. Humanitarian aid (beds, mattresses, blankets, pillows, clothes, etc.) and psychological and informational support are also about the new roles of librarians.

The library supported the victims who had a traumatic experience of saving their own lives and their children's lives. This applies to internally displaced students under the academic mobility program, teachers, and other persons temporarily living on the campus. As a result, the entire range of library services – from the issue of literature and access to databases to consulting on Creative Commons (CC) Licenses and the state service “eSupport” – became available to refugees.

All these circumstances changed the social aspect of the library's activities. As a result, the management decided to rapidly reformat structural subdivisions and implement the “hospitality management” model. In this model, in addition to volunteering, in all forms of user service and conducting online and offline events, it is suggested to choose the most attractive form of communication for them: physical or online. This is the first stage, which requires analysis and new solutions with time and experience.

The library staff constantly improved social knowledge related to the life and relationships of people in a tragic time for the country. And this, in turn, in terms of organizational behavior, allowed the library administration to avoid a corporate crisis.

1.5. Overcoming Ukrainian linguocide

A year of work at the Scientific Library of the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies in the conditions of a bloody war already allows talking about the particular experience in crisis management of library-information affairs. The administration has already analyzed each individual direction and decided which

services should be temporarily “stopped” and which, on the contrary, should be focused on and expanded.

When making decisions, negative points were considered, for example, the outflow of qualified personnel due to dismissal: due to health conditions – three people, failure to return from evacuation abroad – four people, and reduction – four people.

Non-standard situations require non-standard solutions. Having made a detailed analysis of the crisis situation regarding the providing the distance educational process with contemporary scholarly literature in the Ukrainian language, comparing all the pros and cons, the USUST library decided to add a new direction of activity and direct efforts to Open Educational Resources (OER) as one of the methods of overcoming Ukrainian linguocide in educational resources (Kolesnykova et al., 2022, pp. 209-213). In this, the members of the European Network of Open Education Librarians (ENOEL), which the university joined in 2020, persistently helped the library.

USUST, with its library, became the only representative of Ukraine in Coalition SPARC Europe (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources in Europe) (Sparc Europe, n.d.).

Today, there is an excellent result of the partnership of teachers and librarians – six open textbooks created by authors of USUST under the CC License are integrated into the international system of the Open Educational Resources Search Index – OERSI. Currently, these are the only Ukrainian open textbooks available in OERSI.

Together with SPARC Europe, the first practices of the USUST Library in developing OE and OER were presented at conferences in different countries. The library became the winner of the “Open Education Award WINNER 2022” for the implementation of the project “Advocacy Work of the Scientific Library to Advance Open Education in Ukraine” on October 17-20, 2022 (USA).

At the beginning of March 2023, another project of the USUST library received a grant from Creative Commons – CC Open Education Platform. The library will translate and localize the MOOC

“Using Open Educational Resources in Teaching” developed by the Polytechnic University of Milan, to meet the needs of Ukrainian teachers and academic library professionals, overcome language barriers, and ensure equitable and inclusive access to education in times of a full-scale war.

1.6. What do the statistical indicators of university libraries say?

Considering the crisis activity of the USUST library in the first year of the full-scale russian-Ukrainian war, as well as the main statistical indicators of several libraries during this period, it is possible to create a generalized image of the university library of Ukraine in wartime.

Table 1 shows the activities of five university libraries in different regions of Ukraine. These are the scientific libraries (SL) of universities: NTU “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute” (KhPI) – Director Yuliia Hlavcheva; The Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding (NUS) – Director Tamara Kostyrko; Uzhhorod National University (UzhNU) – Director Maria Medved; Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav (HSUP) – Director Olga Shkyra; and Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies (USUST) – Director Tetiana Kolesnykova.

The statistics represent the quantitative indicators of libraries as of January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023: fund, registered users, staff (the number of positions and the actual number of employees

in places), and availability of the library’s website and repository. Since the beginning of the russian-Ukrainian war in 2014, none of the university libraries has been located in the occupied territories.

Thanks to the heroic actions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the active resistance of the population against possible offensives of the russian occupiers, most university libraries (except for the Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding) did not suffer significant damage to buildings and collections in 2022. They were able to work despite the shelling. Unfortunately, the difficult financial situation of the country’s economy and universities made it impossible to allocate public funds to purchase new literature.

The quantitative indicators of the funds before February 24, 2022, and after this tragic date remained almost unchanged. Partial destruction of buildings and damage to book collections in 2022 took place only in the library of the Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding (approximately 20%). Still, no actual literature losses have been established, and publications have not been written off.

The analysis results in terms of the number of registered users are interesting. The data show that during 2022, a significant increase in registered users (by 3150 people) is observed only in the library of the Uzhhorod National University, located in the safest region of Ukraine (Zakarpattia

Table 1. Statistics of the university libraries of Ukraine

Library	Fund		Number of registered users		Staff (positions/employees)		Availability of the website/repository	
	As of January 1, 2022	As of January 1, 2023	As of January 1, 2022	As of January 1, 2023	As of January 1, 2022	As of January 1, 2023	2022	2023
NTU “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”	1403911	1409165	17177	16469	63.5/66	63.5/64	yes/yes	yes/yes
The Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding	762779	762682	7040	6696	37.5/38	37.5/34	yes/yes	yes/yes
Uzhhorod National University	1618216	1617159	17777	20927	63.75/70	57.75/61	yes/yes	yes/yes
Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav	417 637	415 877	6591	7092	20/20	14.5/19	yes/yes	yes/yes
Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies	1394188	1382055	10338	9404	42/42	38/38	yes/yes	yes/yes

Oblast); it has been receiving a powerful wave of refugees since the beginning of the war, sheltering them in its dormitories (Medved, 2022). The library, which actively participated in the information and social support of displaced persons, has a significant improvement in the indicator of the number of registered users. The mode of study of UzhNU students is a physical presence. A slight increase in this indicator is also observed in the Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav library. According to its Director, it works fruitfully in students' physical presence; secondly, it also engaged internally displaced persons.

The libraries of NTU "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute," the Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding, and the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies are in front-line regions under constant shelling. Modes of study at these universities are distance learning. Unfortunately, a small number of students and teachers, for various reasons, stopped studying or working with universities. This has reduced the number of registered users.

Staff indicators are divided into the number of positions and persons working in these positions.

Statistical data show that the number of places remained unchanged in the libraries of NTU "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" and the Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding. And in the libraries of Uzhhorod National University, Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav, and Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies, there was a reduction of positions by 9.4%, 27.5%, and 9.5%, respectively. In all libraries during the war year, there was a decrease in the number of people working in these positions. At the same time, some librarians in all higher education institutions (HEI) are on vacation at their own expense or on leave to take care of a child. However, the administrations of all libraries understand that further staff cuts are inevitable, no matter how painful it is for the collectives (psychologically, physically, or emotionally).

The level of information technology and communication development is conditionally represented by a library website and a repository. The analysis results prove that all university libraries have sufficient digital resources, technologies, and, of course, knowledge and experience to support distance learning, teaching, and research.

CONCLUSION

The study aims to analyze the administrative aspect of the urgent adaptation of the library staff of Ukrainian higher education institutions to the conditions of martial law. The analysis was based in the example of the Scientific Library of the Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies. Moreover, the study considered the main statistical indicators of five libraries as of January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023, to generalize the experience of the university library of Ukraine in wartime.

The war directly affected libraries as one of the three categories of representatives of the higher education system: students, teachers, and university staff. Unfortunately, giving a clear answer regarding probable losses in state libraries is still impossible.

Vectors of library activity direction are distance, openness, unification, and improvement of the library's single information space (means of information interaction, information resources, and information infrastructure). In addition, obtaining new meanings or updating existing ones in library activities – volunteering in various scales, openness, inclusiveness, hospitality, and accelerated integration into international professional communities – are manifestations of new communication models of work.

The analysis of the crisis situation in providing the distance educational of higher education institutions with the modern scholarly literature in the Ukrainian language and the studying of the experience of university libraries in the world and Europe in supporting Open Education and Open Educational Resources allows for defining another new model of work. This is the support of OER by universi-

ty libraries as one of the methods of overcoming Ukrainian linguocide. The successful experience of the USUST library gives hope for implementing this vector in the activities of the libraries of HEI in Ukraine.

Working in a university generally and in a library, even in peacetime, usually involves a high degree of flexibility. Still, it often comes with a certain amount of stress. Directors of university libraries in wartime, having a majority of females in their staff, note the influence of psychological factors on their professional activity. A year after the start of the full-scale war, some female employees experienced deterioration of their psycho-emotional state, depression, nervousness, burnout, and feelings of loneliness. In addition, almost every librarian has a son or daughter, husband or grandson, brother or sister – they defend their families and country in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Therefore, constant worries about the life and health of family and friends, as well as the desire to stay safe, cannot but affect librarians.

At the same time, creating an atmosphere of caring, mutual assistance, and professional and human support in the team, as well as a sense of the importance of each employee and one's affiliation to the library/university community reduces negative psychological factors.

The initiation of new activity directions proves that libraries have an opportunity and capabilities to emerge from this crisis transformed and stronger.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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 Formal analysis: Tetiana Kolesnykova.
 Funding acquisition: Tetiana Kolesnykova.
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